  [redacted]

9 December 1969

How the Soviets View US Strategic Policies and Forces and How They React to These Views

Contents

What Great Ukrainian Plan

[redacted]

9 December 1969

How the Soviets View US Strategic Policies and Forces and How They React to These Views

Abstract

The following comments--based on a wide variety of source materials and methods of analysis--summarize our response to the questions posed in Dr. Kissinger's 13 November 1969 memorandum to the Director of Central Intelligence.

25X1C

--[redacted] Soviet strategic force deployments reflect the view that US strategic forces are not targeted exclusively on either the forces or the cities of the USSR, but rather that the US has developed its targeting doctrine to optimize its war fighting capability across a broad range of scenarios. (See pages 4-6.)

--The present Minuteman has been referred to by the Soviets as a weapon targeted against their strategic missiles. We cannot be certain how they view the capabilities and targeting objectives of Minuteman III and Poseidon. Conflicting reports about these systems in the US press will probably cause some Soviet leaders to be concerned about the survivability of their fixed land based forces. (See pages 6 and 7.)

--The evidence is scanty on exactly how their perceptions of our forces and doctrines enter into their strategic force decisions. Their development and deployment programs--e.g., hardened ICBMs, submarine based missiles, and defensive systems--indicate that their view of the potential US threat weighs in their decisions. Other factors, such as the third country threat and economic considerations, also play a role. (See pages 7 and 8.)

--There is no direct evidence available on the Soviet rationale or targeting objectives in developing multiple reentry vehicles. The requirement--from a Soviet "worst case" point of view--to provide an ability to penetrate likely US ABM defenses probably is the primary reason for the Soviet efforts to develop multiple reentry vehicles. (See pages 8 and 9.)

--Soviet theorists appear to be nearly unanimous in their belief that limited war employing tactical nuclear weapons is the least likely and most unstable variant for war in Europe. There is, however, some recognition that if NATO were to employ nuclear weapons for limited objectives, their use might not result in a general nuclear war. (See pages 9-11.)

--There also is some evidence of a Soviet concern that future Western initiatives might take the form of selective strategic nuclear strikes or the threat of such strikes as a bargaining device. (See page 11.)

--Against a background of experience with Soviet policy, we sometimes receive sufficient evidence to identify and explain decisions with considerable confidence. These are generally decisions which represent extensions or small modifications of previous lines of policy, or which make major changes in policy but take effect slowly and have effects which cannot be disguised. (See pages 13 and 14.)

--In some cases--involving the most tightly held decisions of radical change--evidence is frequently inadequate for firm conclusions. In some other cases, such as deferred decisions, the evidence may be ambiguous, but the basis for an informed judgment usually exists. Although gaps remain, our fund of information for reading Soviet policy decisions has expanded in the last few years. (See pages 14-16.)

--Most of the available information, however, relates to decisions which are already made and are being implemented, rather than to impending ones. Moreover, the "hardness" of our evidence concerning all types of Soviet decisions dwindles as we approach the summit of the decision process. (See pages 16 and 17.)

--Further improvement in our ability to anticipate and understand Soviet decisions depends in part on how much insight we can accumulate on the attitude of key individuals, the relationships among these individuals, and the institutional and organizational pressures that influence the decision making process. (See pages 17-19.)

Nature of the Problem

Is there a single precise view of US strategic policy which is fully accepted as a working basis for formulating Soviet policy decisions?

One of the important tools in defining an opponent's strategy is what he says about his plans and goals. Given the nature of public commentary on US strategic policy, it would not be surprising if the Soviets found it difficult to formulate a unified, clear view of US strategic policy. Furthermore, the variety of special interest groups represented in the top councils of the USSR suggests that such a fully accepted view does not exist, and that various key Soviet officials have views which differ in one or more important respects. As their relative influences change, shifts in the Soviet view of the US may be sufficient to frustrate the use of a postulated single Soviet view of US strategic policy to predict future Soviet decisions on strategic forces with high confidence.

One of our ongoing responsibilities is to assess new evidence on various Soviet views of US strategic policies. We shall update judgments on our ability to understand Soviet choices on weapons systems and deployments on the basis of such new evidence--such as insights that may be derived from statements by the Soviet SALT delegation.

Nature of the Evidence

We do not have a bona fide document which is a statement of the Soviet view of US strategic policies to be used as the basis for Soviet policy decisions at the highest level. Because of this, we must base our assessment of the subject on a wide variety of source materials.

SC-06139/69

Much of this information is derived from what the Soviets say in their public media to audiences at home and abroad and what they say privately to foreign officials, both Communist and non-Communist. We realize that much of what is said in these contexts is for the purpose of fostering Soviet objectives. Nevertheless, some of what is said--or perhaps not said--frequently reflects some aspects of the true Soviet view of US strategic policy.

We also have [redacted] Soviet journals and documents which reflect more accurately how Soviet officials--or at least part of the official Soviet heirarchy--view US strategic policy. Some of these documents also are biased in that they appear to be written to support particular policy proposals of one element or another within the Soviet bureaucracy. In this context the prevailing Soviet view may be indicated by the argumentation against it. [redacted]

25X1C

25X1D

Finally, the hard intelligence we collect on the nature and scope of Soviet strategic forces serves as a firm basis for assessing alternative interpretations of Soviet views of US strategic policies.

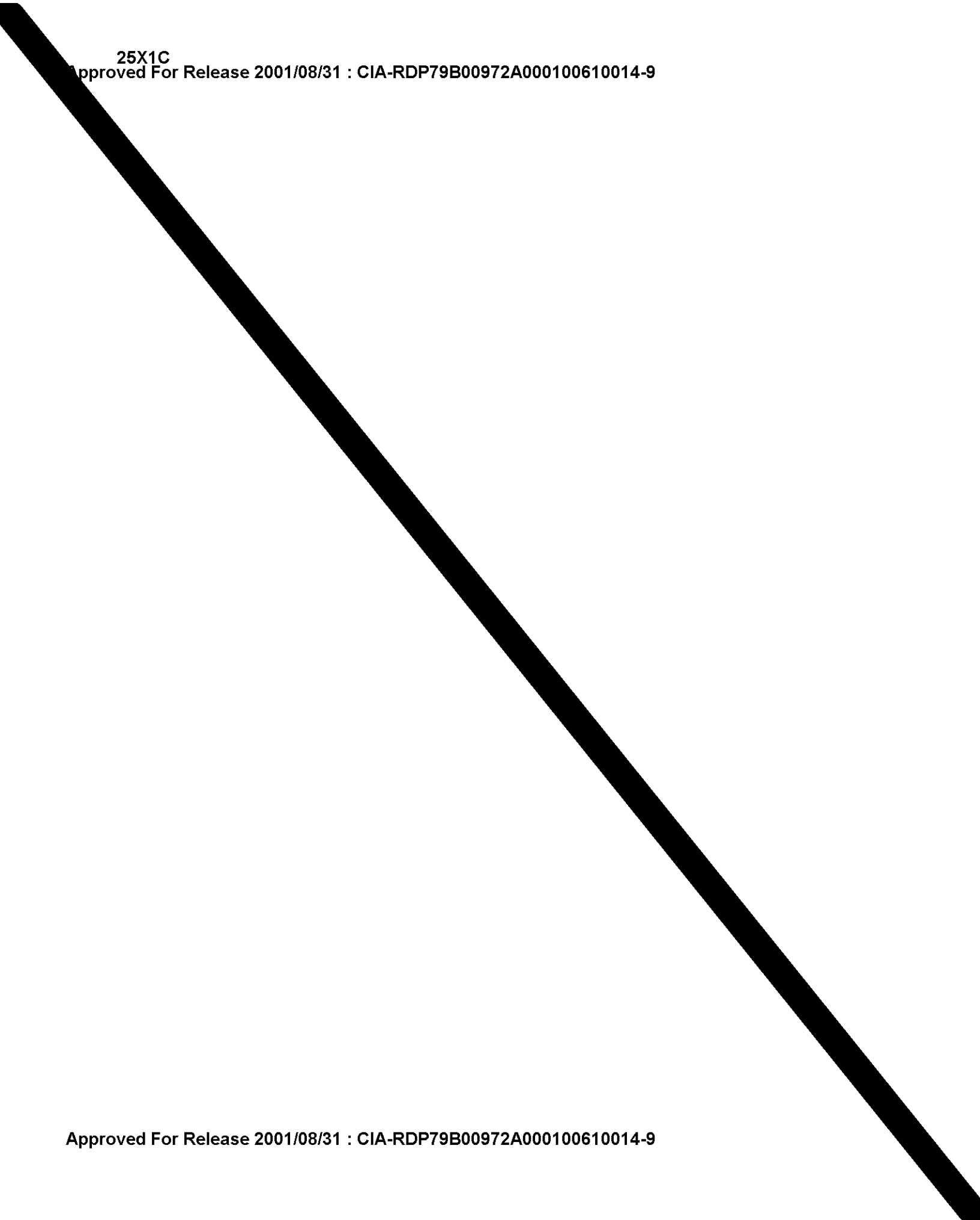
Questions and Responses

25X1C

What do they think is our targeting doctrine? Do they think our Minutemen are targeted on their cities or on their forces?

There are examples in Soviet military literature, [redacted] that reflect the view that US targeting doctrine is versatile. These statements about our targeting doctrine generally convey the message that the US would carry out a nuclear war in the most effective way available whether the US strikes first, second, or simultaneously.

SC-06139/69



[redacted]

Soviet strategic force deployments provide a major source of hard evidence on this question. The Soviets have built their strategic defense forces to protect important political and military targets, particularly those centers in the command and control structure, as well as major population or industrial complexes. Moreover, they have undertaken large and costly programs to ensure the survivability of their strategic strike forces--for example, hardening of their ICBM force, and the development of an SLBM force.

25X1C

[redacted] we conclude that Soviet judgments on US targeting doctrine result from reasonably balanced assessments based on close observation of what the US says both officially and unofficially about its strategic doctrine and forces and what it does in its R&D, deployment programs, and strategic force exercises. We believe that their judgment is that the US has not focused exclusively on either preemptive counterforce strikes or on retaliatory countervalue strikes, but rather that it has developed its targeting doctrine to optimize its war fighting capability across a broad range of scenarios which include both countervalue and counterforce targeting for its strategic strike forces.

25X1C

[redacted]

SC-06139/69

The Soviets probably believe that the Minuteman III will be intended for both hard and soft targets. The Soviets are well aware of the US assessments--in particular those made in the annual publication of the US posture statement--that the MIRV capability of Minuteman IIIs and Poseidons will reduce the importance of the Titan II, which is useful against undefended large soft targets. They probably are also convinced from their observation of US MIRV tests to date and from public discussions in this country that US MIRV developments could result in accuracies that would permit them to be used against hard targets.

How do their perceptions of our forces and doctrines enter into their own strategic force decisions?

Although our information on exactly how the Soviets make their strategic force decisions is very scanty, the key features which enter into their own decisions stand out clearly. For example, in setting about to redress the strategic imbalance that existed in the early Sixties, they obviously were concerned not only with the number of weapons available to each side, but also with their key characteristics--such as reliability, vulnerability, size, and accuracy. They have discussed these characteristics [redacted] and have also made their second strike force as invulnerable as possible by hardening their ICBMs and placing a sizable force of strategic missiles at sea. 25X1C

We know that features other than their perception of the US threat play an important role.

Increasingly, the potential strategic threat from China is being taken into account. For example, the deployment of some of the ABM forward radars is clearly designed for defense against the Chinese.

Statements by senior Soviet military officials also convey concern about the strategic implications of changes in the European power balance.

SC-06139/69

Economic considerations also probably play an important role. Discussions in the open press which indicate a sharp competition between advocates of military and civilian programs for limited resources tend to be substantiated [redacted] Moreover, the military press reveals that a similar competition exists between strategic force advocates and conventional force advocates within the military. 25X1D1a

Would they see a need to have a MIRV to respond to our ICBM force?

There is no direct evidence available on the Soviet rationale for developing multiple reentry vehicles. 25X1C

We are, however, aware of a position taken by some Soviet military planners which calls into question the effectiveness of Soviet ICBMs as first strike weapons against US ICBMs. [redacted] 25X1C

[redacted] at least some Soviet planners believe it would be very difficult to destroy US Minutemen because of their quick reaction time. [redacted] In itself the development of a Soviet MIRV capability would not alter this situation. This, of course, does not rule out the possibility that the Soviets would see MIRVs as an enhancement of their counterforce capability.

The Soviets probably do not see a need for MIRVs to maintain their second strike capability in the face of the *present* US ICBM threat. The requirement--from a Soviet "worst case" point of view--to provide an ability to penetrate likely US ABM defenses probably is the primary reason for the Soviet efforts to develop multiple reentry vehicles.

It is possible, however, that they might also see a MIRV capability as a desirable offset to the Minuteman III and Poseidon deployment. If they believe that fewer of their ICBMs would survive a US first strike, they probably would want to increase the damage potential of their surviving ICBMs by providing

them with a MIRV capability. Proliferation of deployment of the SS-9 and SS-11 ICBMs could also be related to planned US MIRV deployment. It has the advantage over a MIRV response of also increasing the number of aiming points.

What is their current view on the kinds of situations in which we might use nuclear weapons? Do they expect quick use of theater weapons in a war in Europe? Do they see "bargaining" strikes or threat of strikes as a likely device in a confrontation between the US and the USSR?

25X1C

25X1C

[redacted] at least some Soviet strategists believe that the existence of rough strategic nuclear equality between the US and USSR has diminished the likelihood of general nuclear war.

These Soviet strategists appear to consider that the recent achievement of rough nuclear equality has significantly altered the essence of the Soviet nuclear deterrent. Since the late Fifties, the USSR has been claiming the capability to severely damage the US with nuclear weapons in the event of a US first strike on the USSR. The Soviet leaders probably did in fact believe that they would be able to reach the US with at least some nuclear weapons in the event of war. On the other hand, they also were fully aware that the US had an overwhelming nuclear superiority and that the USSR could be much more severely damaged than the US in a nuclear exchange. In short, the USSR recognized that its nuclear deterrent was minimal at best.

25X1C

25X1C

An important implication [redacted] is that a minimal Soviet deterrent may not be enough because in the event of a confrontation the side with superior nuclear forces will be tempted to use them even if it recognizes that it probably will incur some nuclear damage itself. This comes very close to the proposition of Western military strategists who maintain that nuclear capabilities

must be viewed in the specific contexts of crisis management and crisis stability as well as in the general context of assured destruction.

A state of credible mutual deterrence based on "nuclear equality" could significantly alter the long held tenet of Soviet military doctrine which maintained that a US-USSR military conflict, even if it is begun conventionally, would rapidly escalate into a general nuclear war. [redacted]

25X1C

25X1C

Soviet theorists appear to be nearly unanimous in their belief that limited war employing tactical nuclear weapons is the least likely and most unstable variant for war in Europe. The US use of tactical nuclear weapons, in their view, would merely be a ploy to achieve US strategic goals while protecting US territory.

25X1C

25X1C

There is, however, some recognition [redacted] that if NATO were to employ nuclear weapons for limited objectives, their use might not result in a general nuclear war. [redacted]

25X1C

25X1C

[redacted]

[redacted]

25X1C

Regarding the threat of strikes as a bargaining device, there is some evidence of a concern that future Western initiatives might take such a form. An
25X1C article in the [redacted] Communist Party theoretical journal *Kommunist* acknowledges--and then discounts the argument--that a "diplomacy of force" could be attempted against the socialist community by the "manipulation of threats" which would ensure the attainment of political demands "at the cost of the risk of nuclear war, but not at the cost of war."

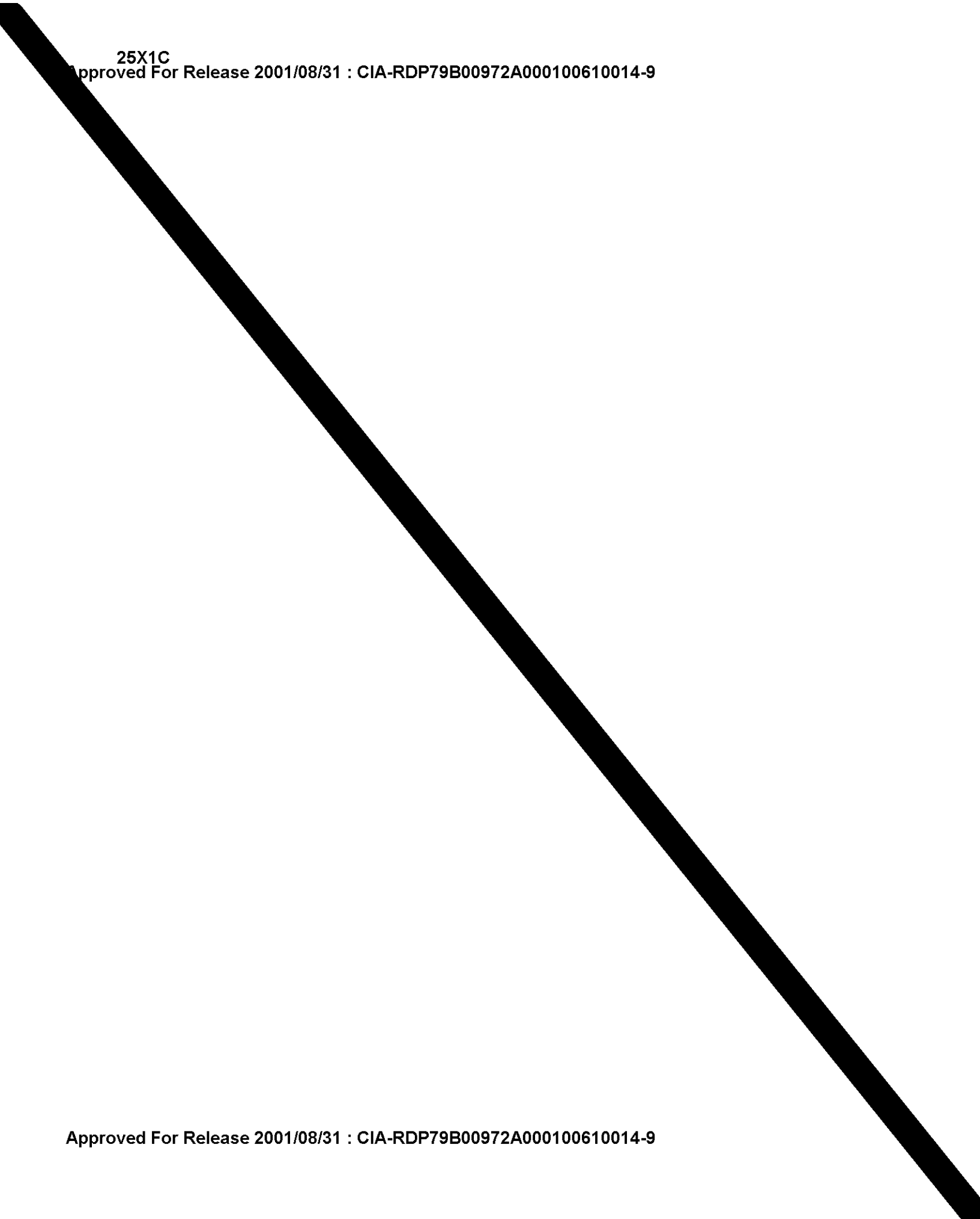
Elements of Continuity and Change in Soviet Strategic Thinking and Practices

Over the long term Soviet evaluations and perspectives of the strategic relationship change as new weapons developments alter specific aspects of the nuclear balance; as the Soviet leadership evolves; and as other developments in domestic goals and priorities occur. External challenges stemming from other countries--such as is now occurring in the case of China--also take on new meaning that affects Soviet decisions related to the US-USSR arms balance.

Some Soviet military practices and strategic theories are slow to change, however, and we have found it useful to identify as many of these elements
25X1C as possible as aids in analyzing new Soviet concepts and in evaluating how the Soviets are reacting or are likely to react to particular political and military events.

[redacted]

SC-06139/69



Capability to Analyze Soviet Decision Making

Our ability to decipher Soviet policy decisions at the time they are made varies considerably from case to case. Two main variables affect the speed with which a decision may be recognized and the confidence with which it may be interpreted. One is the degree to which the decision flows from and is consistent with a pattern of previous Soviet conduct. 25X1C 25X1C

[redacted]

Most Soviet political decisions represent extensions or small modifications of previous lines of policy. We generally have sufficient evidence to recognize such decisions. The changes they bring are often forecast 25X1C

[redacted]

a recent Soviet increase in support of the anti-Israeli Arab guerrilla movements. The interpretation of such evidence must be weighed against other evidence about Soviet purposes, in this case, by evidence suggesting that the Soviets still desire a Middle Eastern settlement.

We are also in a good position to interpret Soviet decisions which make major changes in policy but take effect slowly and have effects which cannot be disguised. For example, the early decisions of the present Soviet leadership to alter Khrushchev's policy and offer military aid to Hanoi were signaled by a series of indicators, beginning with the Soviet cultivation of Phan Van Dong in Moscow in November 1964 and the change in tone in the Soviet press toward the DRV. After that, in January 1965, came the first photographic evidence of Soviet weapons in North Vietnam, the visit of Kosygin to Hanoi in February,

25X1B

[redacted] confirming the continued introduction of Soviet weapons and experts. Although other analytical problems arose in connection with the sporadic Chinese obstruction of Soviet aid to Vietnam, the main outlines of the new Soviet policy toward military aid to the DRV were clear from the start.

A different problem arises in cases where Soviet decisions are closely held until some predetermined date when the effects of the decision are to be made visible. In such cases Soviet policymakers restrict knowledge of the decision to a small number of people and ensure that neither the Soviet media nor diplomats leak the story. The conspiratorial traditions of the Soviet Communist Party and the formidable disciplinary powers of the Soviet state facilitate secrecy. 25X1B

[redacted]

Soviet policy as a whole is relatively stable and slow moving, particularly under the post-Khrushchev regime. Radical and conspiratorial Soviet decisions are rare. One major example was the removal of

Khrushchev from office in October 1964. Knowledge of the decision to attempt to oust him was confined to a cabal of Politburo members, senior KGB officials, and one or two senior military men. We had long known of considerable Politburo dissatisfaction with Khrushchev--as did Khrushchev. But neither we nor Khrushchev had a source within the small group of plotters.

In concrete terms, neither the US intelligence community nor Khrushchev could foretell that the two henchmen Khrushchev had assigned to supervise the Soviet security organs--Brezhnev and Shelepin--would betray him and agree to use the KGB against him. Such betrayals--like that of Khrushchev's protege Shepilov in 1957--are innately unpredictable to the foreign analyst, although it may be expected that they will continue to occur from time to time in the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, after the fact, sufficient information became available [redacted] to permit us to reconstruct the sequence of events with some confidence.

NSA 25X3

NSA 25X3

Another example was the closely held decision to invade Czechoslovakia in August 1968. We knew that the Soviet leaders had long been weighing such a move, that they had been hesitating, and that there were imposing factors both urging them on and holding them back. Military movements revealed the Soviet capability for rapid intervention but did not provide evidence as to whether the Soviets had decided to intervene or merely to continue military pressure on Prague. We did not have specific evidence from the Soviet decision making bodies which would have enabled the US intelligence community to estimate that military intervention was certain or likely.

SC-06139/69

There are also instances where we know the Soviet decision makers are considering a given issue but seem unable to reach a conclusion. Examples are the recurring debates over resource allocation, the months of vacillation in 1968 preceding the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the seeming uncertainty in 1969 as to how to handle the Chinese border problem, and the shifting attitudes, during 1968 and 1969, toward the SALT talks. On occasion, Soviet decision makers seem to temporize because all available alternatives seem unacceptable. Soviet policy toward Czechoslovakia before the invasion may be a case in point; the USSR sought unsuccessfully to force the Czechs into line without the need for an invasion with its expected adverse consequences. Soviet decisions may also be deferred while waiting for the resolution of a related problem. It is possible, for example, that one factor in Soviet delays in naming a date to start the SALT talks was a desire to wait and see whether the Chinese border problem would assume crisis proportions.

In instances where Soviet policy decisions are being deferred for some reason or another, close study of the Soviet press becomes especially important because indicators from other sources tend to be scarce. In the past, the press has been particularly useful in furnishing clues on certain of the disagreements within the leadership. Such clues, however, are rarely so clear-cut as to rule out differences in interpretation. When dealing with deferred decisions, the analyst usually will have evidence to work with, but it will be opaque and ambiguous evidence, and the analyst's judgments are likely to be tentative.

25X1C

25X1C

The "hardness" of our evidence concerning all types of Soviet decisions dwindles as we approach the summit where the decisions are made. For example, [redacted] But we have only occasional inferential evidence from public statements and other sources as to the thinking of

25X1B

25X1B

various Politburo members which would directly affect their votes on such critical questions.

In 1969, we received several indications [redacted] 25X1D

[redacted] which suggested that the Soviets had begun to mull over the question of an attack on Chinese nuclear installations. [redacted]

25X1C

[redacted] However, the thinking of the members of the Soviet decision making bodies on the consequences of such action was simply not available. Previous public [redacted] remarks by Politburo members on their "China problem" were too general or were not in a proper context to fix with any precision how serious the Soviet leaders might be about an attack and to what extent they were merely trying to intimidate the Chinese.

25X1D

Our ability to anticipate and understand the most difficult Soviet decisions, therefore, depends to a degree on how much insight we can accumulate on the personal political attitudes of and the relationships among the handful of men who make up the [redacted] major Soviet decision making bodies.

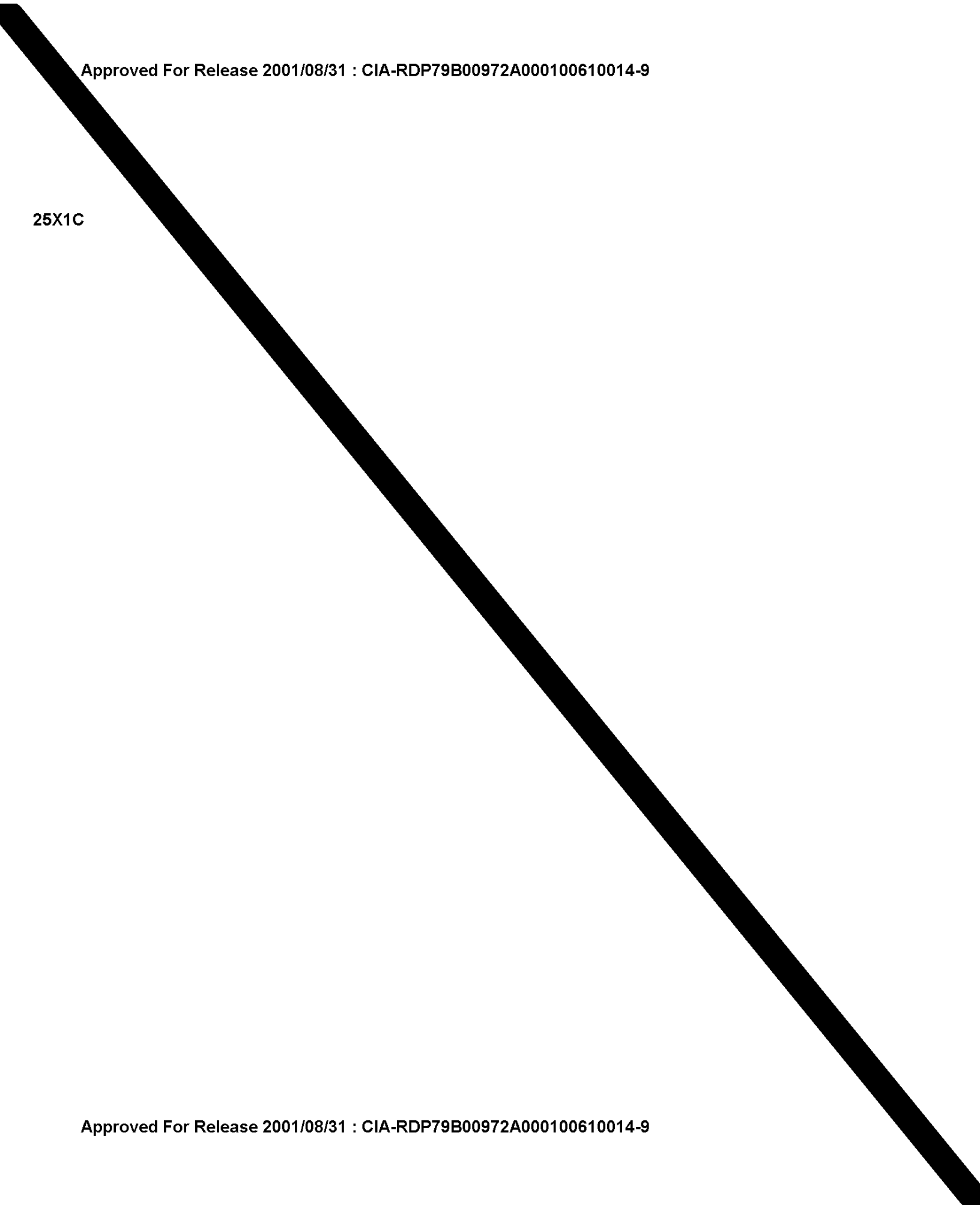
25X1C

25X1C

[redacted]

SC-06139/69

25X1C



Approved For Release 2001/08/31 : CIA-RDP79B00972A000100610014-9

25X1C

25X1C

the Institute of the USA, headed by Yuriy Arbatov, have suggested that differences of view exist among Politburo advisers in their appraisals of the present Administration.

25X1C

[redacted]

25X1C

By and large, the specific content of documents providing policy advice and intelligence assessments written for the Politburo by the Central Committee apparatus and its consultants, the apex of the Soviet intelligence system, is unknown. On the disarmament issue, we can perceive only the broad outlines of the differences of view among contending groups about acceptable force structure. Details are unavailable on the range of positions taken by key individuals, the form in which presentations reach different policymakers, and the extent of coordination of differing views.

In sum, we have made substantial progress in our ability to interpret Soviet decisions in recent years. Against a background of experience with Soviet policy, we receive sufficient evidence to identify and explain most decisions with considerable confidence. In a few cases--the most tightly held decisions of radical change--evidence is usually inadequate for firm conclusions. In some other cases, such as deferred decisions, the evidence may be ambiguous, but the basis for an informed judgment usually exists. Although gaps remain, our fund of information for reading Soviet policy decisions has expanded markedly in the last few years.

[redacted] 25X1C

25X1C

25X1C the Institute of the USA, headed by Yuriy Arbatov, have suggested that differences of view exist among Politburo advisers in their appraisals of the present Administration. [redacted]

By and large, the specific content of documents providing policy advice and intelligence assessments written for the Politburo by the Central Committee apparatus and its consultants, the apex of the Soviet intelligence system, is unknown. On the disarmament issue, details are scanty on the range of positions taken by key individuals, the form in which presentations

reach different policymakers, and the extent of coordination of differing views. We can, however, perceive with some confidence the broad outlines of the differences of view among contending groups about acceptable force structures.

In sum, we have made substantial progress in our ability to interpret Soviet decisions in recent years. Against a background of experience with Soviet policy, we receive sufficient evidence to identify and explain most decisions with considerable confidence. In a few cases--the most tightly held decisions of radical change--we must apply insight against very limited evidence. In some other cases, such as deferred decisions, the evidence may be ambiguous, but the basis for an informed judgment usually exists. Although gaps remain, our fund of information for reading Soviet policy decisions has expanded markedly in the last few years.

SC-06139/69

HANDLE VIA COMINT CHANNELS

WARNING

This document contains classified information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, US Code, Title 18, Sections 793, 794, and 798. The law prohibits its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person, as well as its use in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States.

THIS DOCUMENT MUST BE KEPT IN COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE CHANNELS AT ALL TIMES

It is to be seen only by US personnel especially indoctrinated and authorized to receive COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE information; its security must be maintained in accordance with COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE REGULATIONS.

No action is to be taken on any COMMUNICATIONS INTELLIGENCE which may be contained herein, regardless of the advantages to be gained, unless such action is first approved by the Director of Central Intelligence.